



# THE DESERT SUN

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Phoenix VA Health Care System

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## PACT Means Better Care for Patients

By Paula L. Pedene APR

The Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) is joining a growing number of VA health care facilities in adopting a new method of health delivery called Patient Aligned Care Teams or PACTs. This system is heavily patient-centered and focuses on quick and easy communication between patients and their health care providers.

Doctors, nurses and other health care and administrative professionals will form the teams to care for a panel of Veterans.

"Patients now will have a doctor, a nurse, and other support staff to help manage and monitor their health care needs," said Dr. Jamie Robbins PVAHCS Interim Director. "This enhanced coordination of care will help us place the patient's needs first, to help them be even more proactive in managing their health care."

In addition to improving communication between Veterans and their providers, PACTs make getting access to specialty care easier on the Veteran. When such care is needed, the PACT will work with the Veteran to schedule an appointment and then follow up with the Veteran and specialty provider to ensure continuous, effective, appropriate care.

"PACTs will be able to handle many routine questions – about forms or symptoms, for example – over the phone or through secure e-mail messages on My HealtheVet," said Robbins.

PACT is under the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, which is charged with capturing innovation, aligning and coordinating ongoing initiatives, and demonstrating and deploying new models of care.

PACT is VA's adaptation of the popular contemporary team-based model of health care known as Patient Centered Medical Home. This model provides continuous and coordinated care throughout a patient's lifetime.

Assisting in the new rollout is Karen White RN, who is the PVAHCS Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Program Manager.

"PACT is more wellness rather than disease or sick care focused. It takes into account the entire person so it is more proactive. We really work with the Veterans about planning for their health. You plan for your finances, your career; you actually plan better for your death than your health. Therefore, we think we can do a better job of making Veterans healthier and leading better lives through this new model. We're transforming the way that we do things, and that's exciting," said White.

At present, the PACT model is available in the Emerald, Northwest, Thunderbird, Diamond, and Gold



Clinics. Roll out to the rest of the clinics is set for completion by the end of this fiscal year.

More than six million Veterans receive health care services at 1,500 VA locations across the nation. At the Phoenix VA Health Care System, we provide care to more than 80,000 Veterans at the main campus, the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center, and our seven outlying clinics. ■

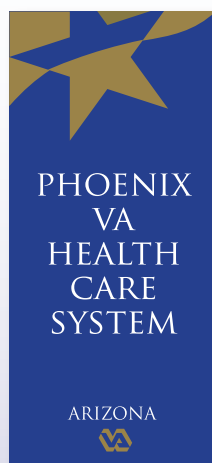
# PR PROVIDERS

Public Affairs Officer Paula L. Pedene APR often has to garner media assistance from staff for interviews and other information on a short turn around basis for media queries. When staff assist our VA with media and other PR requests Pedene recognizes them as PR Providers. This helps us provide our four-hour turnaround for media queries, and helps to support other special needs for public relations assistance. PR Providers earn recognition in this column and they receive a special token of appreciation for their PR efforts.



- ◆ Linda McCarthy for your assistance in placing the [Dr. Reaven story from Channel 3](#) on facebook in a timely manner.
- ◆ James Larson for your assistance with the Sun Wize media queries with the ENR Southwest for our Solar Project.
- ◆ Dr. Telfer, Dr. Kattar, Michael Owens, and John Thompson for your assistance with the OEF/OIF/OND KNXV (ABC) 15 story
- ◆ Dr. James Robbins for your interview with Art Sloane of the Arizona Republic
- ◆ Linda Herrly for you assistance with the Care Giver interview with the Arizona Republic
- ◆ Joan McCarthy, Dr. Andrea Weyer, Dr. Carlos Carrera for your assistance with the Heroes Central stories for KPNX (NBC) 12.
- ◆ Bill Messer and RJ Mitchell for your assistance with the KPNX (NBC) 12 interviews at the station
- ◆ Dr. Carlos Carrera, Jama Carpenter and Michelle Sullivan for your assistance with the KNXV (ABC) 15 story on our young returning Veterans and their issues with substance abuse.
- ◆ Dr. Nanette Auriemma for your assistance with the KPHO (CBS) 5 Investigators interview on the effects of Agent Orange
- ◆ Ken Klein, Student Volunteer, for your assistance with the Grand Canyon University visit.
- ◆ Gabrielle Duffey and Teri Brookins for your support with KTAR McMahon Group for Memorial Day.

We thank you all for being PR Providers!



**The Desert Sun** is a bi-monthly printed publication for VA staff, volunteers, our Congressional members, Veterans Service Organizations and the Phoenix community.

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# Who Needs Volunteers? We Do!!

By Michelle Roberts, GECS

The Community Living Center would not be the same without our loyal volunteers. We have some volunteers who have been here longer than many of our paid employees. Some of them are here three to four days per week and several hours of the workday. Their duties vary from sitting with the residents who are dying to tidying up the bird cage and making sure the cage is clean and the birds have plenty of food and water.

May Swanson is one of these exceptional volunteers. She is available 24 hours per day to be at the bedside of our dying Veterans. She conducts Tai Chi Chih classes for patients in the CLC and Mental Health and for facility staff. She provides Reiki and Massage Therapy for the patients when requested by Medical Staff. Swanson is the one who takes primary care of the aviary. She was not asked to do so but just immediately assumed this duty as her own. She also spends time with the Veterans by assisting with community outings and Recreation Therapy in the CLC whether it is the visiting entertainment or just sitting visiting and/or playing cards with the Veterans. Finally, she keeps our bulletin boards in the Sports Room and the CLC Dining Room updated with Veteran accomplishments, birthdays and other activities in which the Veterans have participated.

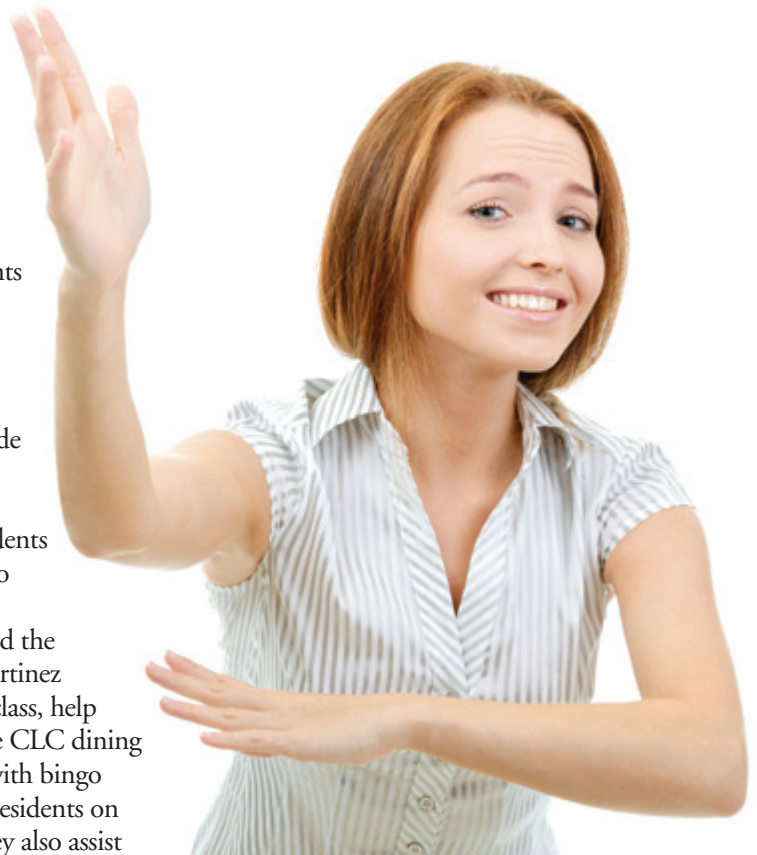
Delores Schepp has been with us for 28 years and provides many invaluable services. She, too, is on call for any Veteran who may be here dying without family or friends to make the journey less painful. Many of the Veterans call her "Mom" because she spends so much time and energy making them feel cared for and provides comfort in times of crisis. Schepp recruits, mentors and counsels new volunteers. She also escorts the Veterans to their final resting place at their "Last Tribute". She works diligently with the American Legion Auxiliary to provide donations of anything the Veteran residents might need. She coordinates the annual ALA Gift Shop

for the holidays and distributes gifts in the CLC and Intensive Care Units.

Kay Davis and Candy Martinez are two volunteers who spend a lot of time assisting Veteran residents with anything that is needed. They currently help to maintain the interior courtyard and the flower planter outside the main entrance of the Community Living Center. They assist residents of the CLC to be able to go outside, to the store or just for a stroll around the grounds. Davis and Martinez assist with the exercise class, help prepare the tables in the CLC dining room for lunch, assist with bingo and activities and take residents on tours of the facility. They also assist with getting residents into the van for off-site activities. They help to move the resident's personal possessions when a room change is required. Their most important contribution is just providing some interaction with the residents.

Michael Bryant has been providing exercise classes for the Veterans in the CLC for a couple of years now. He just recently completed a Vocational Rehab program in which he assisted the Recreation Therapy staff by performing some RT assistant duties. He provided assistance with the daily activities and some evening activities for those who were able. He also spends time talking with the residents and provided some one-one-one exercises for those who were not able to attend his regular classes. He was well-liked by the residents and staff and will continue to provide the exercise classes as a volunteer.

Eric Jones is a volunteer who is pursuing his Recreation Therapy degree and has assisted with the electronic portions of our Veteran activities. He has helped to load music onto I-Pods, MP-3 players and other such electronic



devices. He provides assistance with all resident activities and whatever is needed. He has just been accepted as our summer Recreation Therapy Intern and will be doing his residency training in the CLC. He will be able to take over some Recreation Therapy duties that will be mutually beneficial for him and the facility.

Ruth Gibbons has been a long-time volunteer who provides musical entertainment at lunch time for our Veteran residents and visits with and reads to the residents on a regular basis. Betty Hatchette provides weekend bingo for the residents. Leroy McDaniel comes by to play the guitar for the residents frequently.

So, in conclusion, as to who needs volunteers? We do in the CLC!! Can you imagine how many paid staff it would take to replace these invaluable, dedicated and compassionate volunteers?? We are thankful for their service. You can become a volunteer by contacting our Voluntary Department at (602) 222-6419. ■



# Our Patients Tell Us...

By Victoria Reyes - My HealtheVet Coordinator

**Henry E Noorda Jr.:** I first started using My HealtheVet to obtain refills for prescriptions. Little did I know, I would soon use My HealtheVet to read up more information on new prescriptions and become more involved as a patient when it comes time to appointments with my primary care physician.

By using this online portal I find I am more prepared to discuss treatment plans and accomplish more during my health care visits. I have found that the recent addition of secure messaging to be a particularly helpful. After a recent appointment with my primary care doctor, she ordered new lab tests. Upon completing the tests and waiting the appropriate amount time for the test results, I found that through the secure messaging system I was able to inquire to my doctor asking what the test results were and the next step we were taking in my overall treatment plan.

I find the usefulness of My HealtheVet to be effective when one of my controlled substance prescriptions needs to be refilled as well. I contact the controlled substances line leaving the required information needed. They forward

the request to my doctor who then writes the prescription. I log onto My HealtheVet usually a day or two after leaving the request and verify that the new prescriptions been written and then have a better idea of when I can expect the delivery of the prescription.

This year, I made a resolution that I need to lose weight and better track my health. So I am taking advantage of My HealtheVet's section *track health* to enter my daily vitals readings and food and exercise journals.

For my appointments, I recently started logging into My HealtheVet account then clicking the *get care tab*, then clicked the *appointments tab* to view my past and upcoming appointments at my local VA.

I have also discovered that now at set intervals the My HealtheVet website emails me notifying me that I have a scheduled appointment at the Phoenix VA Health Care System. I have found this to be very helpful for remembering my appointments.



**Lyn A. Pinckney:** I am so pleased that we have the secure messaging program available to us in My HealtheVet. It is a



great system to be able to communicate on line with your Primary Care Physician, order medication, check your appointments, make appointments; in general, it has allowed me to check all my health needs.

It is a great relief for me as I live on the road, to be able to contact my Primary Care Physician without having to try to use the telephone system. It takes no time at all before someone answers your E-Mail. Now I can talk directly to my Doctor.

My HealtheVet provides us an easy way to communicate with the hospital staff without having to leave the privacy of your home. Please feel free to post this E-Mail in your newsletter for all the Veterans to see and read, so they can participate. I know once they use this system it will be a great benefit to them as been for me.

All enrolled patients can take advantage of My HealtheVet by registering at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). ■

## VA Recipe Box Offers Heart Healthy Options

The Phoenix VA Health Care System website has a great recipe box full of heart healthy and low fat items. You can find them at [www.phoenix.va.gov/news/recipes/health.asp](http://www.phoenix.va.gov/news/recipes/health.asp).

Here's a great grilled recipe you can enjoy this summer.

### Sizzlin' Grilled Salmon

Ingredients:

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp parsley, chopped

4 (4 ounces) fillets salmon

### Directions:

- ◆ Mix marinade. Place seasoning on salmon fillets and cover.
- ◆ Marinate in the refrigerator about 1 hour, turning occasionally.
- ◆ Pre-heat grill, turn to low heat.
- ◆ Place fillets in aluminum foil, cover with marinade, and seal. Place sealed salmon on grill and cook 25 to 35 minutes, until easily flakes with a fork.



### Nutrition Info:

Servings Per Recipe: 4  
Calories: 216  
Total Fat: 18  
Monounsaturated Fat: 12.5 g  
Polyunsaturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Saturated Fat: 3.0 g  
Cholesterol: 37 mg  
Sodium: 563 mg  
Total Carbohydrates: 3 g  
Dietary Fiber: 0 g  
Protein: 24 g

# VA/DOD Smart Phone App Helps Veterans Manage PTSD

American Telemedicine Association

Veterans dealing with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can turn to their smart phones for help anytime with the PTSD Coach application created by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense.

"This is about giving Veterans and Servicemembers the help they earned when and where they need it," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We hope they, their families and friends, download this free app. Understanding PTSD and those who live with it is too important to ignore."

PTSD Coach lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with local sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful individualized strategies for managing PTSD symptoms at any moment. The free PTSD Coach app is now available for download from the iTunes store and will be available for Android devices by the end of the spring.

"This application acknowledges the frequency with which our Warriors and

Veterans use technology and allows them to get help when and where they feel most comfortable," said Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Jonathan Woodson.

The PTSD Coach is primarily designed to enhance services for individuals who are already receiving mental health care, though it is certainly helpful for those considering entering mental health care and those who just want to learn more about PTSD.

"This is a great service we are providing to Veterans, Servicemembers, their families and friends, but it should not be seen as a replacement for traditional therapy," said VA's Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel. "Veterans should utilize all of the benefits they have earned with their service and one of the best things about this app is it will get Veterans connected to the places that are out there to provide help."

The application is one of the first in a series of jointly designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and the Defense Department's National Center



for Telehealth and Technology to help Servicemembers, Veterans, their families and friends manage their readjustment challenges and get anonymous assistance. Given the current popularity of mobile devices, VA and the Defense Department hope to reach tens of thousands of Veterans, Servicemembers, and their family members with the new suite of apps.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA's National Center for PTSD Website: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>. More apps from DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology can be found at: <http://www.t2health.org/apps>. ■

## Crisis Intervention Can Save Lives

During the past several years VA has seen a spike in suicides amongst Veterans. That's why a Suicide Prevention Hotline was set to help Veterans in need. The hotline is available 24/7 for Veterans, family members and friends. People can just pick up the phone and call 1-800-273-8255 and get help.

Some of the highest risk factors for suicide among Veterans are chronic pain, stressors, or untreated depression. These factors increase the chances of suicide by nearly 50%.

Preliminary evidence from the National Violent Death Reporting System shows there is hope of a better outlook. Veterans 18-29 who use VA health care services have a lower suicide rate.

The Suicide Prevention Hotline

resulted in more than 417,000 calls with 15,000 rescues/saves since its inception in 2007. The hotline is currently being "rebranded" as ***The Veterans Crisis Line***.

People may not realize support does not end when contact does. In fact information is shared with VA in three ways...online, voicemail to the local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) and through a secure email to the coordinator telling them a Veteran at this number needs help. The next day the local SPC will call the number back and offer further assistance and assist the Veteran by getting into their VA and helping them.

The rescues are incredible. A suicidal soldier in Iraq was chatting with a Crisis Counselor online. The SPC contacted his unit's chaplain who went to the Veteran,

talked with him and got him the help he needed. A veteran in Oregon was sitting by the train tracks, waiting to end his life by jumping in front of a train. The Veteran called the hotline and told the SPC his plans. The SPC (hearing trains in the background) contacted the police department nearby which sent a negotiator to talk him off the tracks while he was talking to the SPC.

It's important to recognize the needs for such outreach to help our Veterans in need. If you, a friend or a loved one hear a Veteran speak about hurting themselves, or being extremely depressed, or turning to drugs and alcohol to cope, reach out. Call the Crisis Hotline number at 1-800-273-8255. We're thankful for your efforts to assist those who have served our country. ♦

# HIGHLIGHTS

## Around the Medical Center

Paula L. Pedene, APR, Public Affairs Officer

- Thanks to all our **providers** for assisting in delivering excellence in Women's Health Care as we are exceeding our benchmarks! We are at 100% this quarter with our cervical exam, which brings us to an annual score of 93% and puts above the 86% national level. We are at 83% for breast exams, which are an annual score of 81% and puts us above the 77% national level.

- Congratulations to **Dr. Aramesh Saremi** for receiving an American Diabetes Association's Young Investigator Travel Grant Award for the 71st Scientific Sessions.

- Our Mammography unit added new staff members. The team now includes **Dr. Michelle Dorsey** lead, **Christine Crawford**, Supervisor Diagnostic Radiology and **Tara Woodberry**, Diagnostic Radiology Tech.



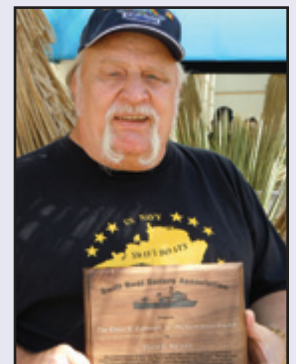
Dr. Michelle Dorsey, Christine Crawford and Tara Woodberry

- Congratulations to **Dr. Elicia Nademin** whose manuscript she co-authored is being published. The data is derived from a database she helped to create as part of her dissertation. Here is the listing: Cox, D. W., Ghahramanlou-Holloway, M., Greene, F. N., Bakalar, J. L., Schendel, C. L., Nademin, E. et al. (in press). *Suicide in the United States Air Force: Risk factors communicated before and at death*. Journal of Affective Disorders.
- We wish to acknowledge the actions of VA Police Officers **Fred DeWerth** and **Ken Wright** who responded to a call of shots being fired. Without hesitation and no further information, our officers responded to the exterior of the facility where they came in to contact with a man yelling, "I have a gun". The situation stemmed from a road rage incident. Our officer's swift actions prevented a bad situation from escalating to something far worse. Their ability to respond quickly, with limited information and placing themselves in harms way for the safety of others is a true example of courage and willingness to get the job done. Thanks to **Lt. Norm Drury**, **Sgt Timothy Franklin** and **Officer Hector Barahona** for their efforts in assisting with the situation.

- **John "Jack" Bruin** Celebrated his 99<sup>th</sup> Birthday as an inpatient at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center. Bruin was born in Detroit on May 13, 1912 and served in the Army in World War II.



- Congratulations to **David Mills**, President of Outpost Harry Survivors Association who received an Award from the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates. While in Washington, D.C., Mills was invited to a reception and recognized for his military service by Speaker of the House John Boehner and Actor Gary Sinise. Mills was one of the last men standing after the epic attack at Outpost Harry during the Korean War. Mills was in a Documentary on Cox Cable, channel 88, May 31 and June 1.
- **Former Medical Center Director John Fears** was recently awarded the CEO Communications Excellence Award from the Public Relations Society of America's Health Academy. Fears was cited for his work at VA and for his efforts in rebuilding the Women's Hospital in Afghanistan through a joint US effort between Health and Human Services and VA. Fears retired in 2006 and resides in Fountain Hills, AZ where he still meets with Veterans at various functions. To see the full release on his award go to [www.prsa.org/healthacademy](http://www.prsa.org/healthacademy)
- US Navy Swift Boat Veteran **David D. Hansen** was recently awarded (May 7, 2011) the Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. Humanitarian Award from the Swift Boat Sailors Association. Hansen was commended for his dedication, service and commitment to fellow swifties, Vietnam Vets and other Veteran Warriors and Widows. He was cited for his encouragement and guiding efforts for the more than 20 Veterans who have secured their benefits from VA thanks to his efforts. His unselfish actions are a reflection of his



Continued next page



true Swift Esprit de Corps. BRAVO ZULU David Hansen! Hansen extends his thanks to Rick Markson, Dr. Scott McCall, Kate Monroe, and Jackie Stone for all the support they have given to him in bringing him to a good state of mind.

■ **Dr. Raymond Chung** recently accepted a position as the Chief Medical Officer at Veterans Integrated

Service Network 5 which is located in Baltimore, MD. Dr. Chung was appointed Chief of Staff at the Phoenix VA Health Care System in 2006. Prior to his service at Phoenix he was the ACOS for Education at San Antonio VAMC. We wish Dr. Chung the best in his new position. ■



*Dr. Raymond Chung*

## Recreation Therapy Promotes Health, Wellness and Disease Prevention to Veterans

By Lynn Hambel, MA, CTRS

Promoting health and wellness and preventing disease amongst our Veterans is a part of the mission of the Mental Health and Behavioral Science Service (MHBSS) Recreation Therapy Specialty Team. They utilize various fitness interventions at the Phoenix VA Health Care System to do this including art and music therapy, fitness, computer education and more.

Their popular fitness program will be expanding to include additional groups and fitness centers at the main hospital and at all Community Based Outpatient Clinics in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area.

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), "there are literally zillions of exercise benefits to be gained through a regular fitness and nutrition plan". Research supports that individuals who exercise on a regular basis have increased energy, enhanced mental focus, improved range of motion, strength and stamina; improved circulation, digestion, glycogen storage, endurance, better sleep patterns and body composition. When people exercise routinely it can also help decrease risks of heart attack, osteoporosis, hypertension, colon cancer, and non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus. In addition, recent research has demonstrated that women who regularly exercise can reduce their risk of breast cancer by up to 60%, and anyone who struggles with anxiety,

stress and/or depression can decrease symptoms and improve their mood through participation in a regular fitness program.

Does this help convince you about the benefits of regular exercise? If not, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov), and start reading.

The National Institute of Health recommends two hours and 30 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week for adults. Aerobic activities increase your breathing and heart rate. Examples of aerobic activities include: brisk walking, yard work, swimming, biking, hiking, and dancing to name a few.

Strength and core training are also important to aid in the maintenance of muscle strength and joint function as well as to decrease body fat and reduce pain. In addition, recent research has found that participation in a simple balance-training program cannot only improve posture and stability, but it can also decrease and/or prevent falls.

MH & BSS Recreation Therapy provides a wide range of fitness groups and activities to meet all of our Veteran's needs. Programs include:

- Group exercise classes using
  - resistance bands,
  - Tai Chi
  - Strength training
  - Endurance training

A Certified Recreation Therapist meets with the Veteran to individualize and develop a program to help reach outcomes each Veteran would like to

achieve.

Many of the MH & BSS Recreation Therapists are Personal Fitness Trainers certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine, which prepares them to utilize the most updated, evidence-based techniques available.

In addition, MH & BSS Recreation Therapy partners with Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service (especially Kinesiotherapy) and the MOVE program to ensure the Veterans health and well being.

Veterans interested in participating in the MH & BSS Outpatient Recreation Therapy Fitness Program may contact a Recreation Therapist at ext. 7250 for further information. ■



# Fostering Nurses that are Trusted to Care for America's Heroes

By Matilde Cangco and the Nursing Recruitment & Retention Committee

The Phoenix VA Health Care System recognizes the following Nursing Excellence Awardees for 2011:

**Guillermo (Jose) Torres, Nurse's Aide:** Torres has been a Nurse's Aide for 10 years. Being a Veteran himself, Torres understands the importance of VA's Core Values: trust, respect, excellence, commitment and compassion. He works successfully with the RNs and other members of the health care team to provide outstanding patient care. He consistently demonstrates a willingness and desire to improve Veteran care.

He has developed sensitivity for the special needs of the surgical patients on 3B and an awareness of effective measures that promote comfort and a sense of well being. He shows his commitment to Veterans by making each of them feel welcome and caring for them. He is cheerful, polite, knowledgeable and respectful.

Patients know that he is interested in their safety and that he will be available to assist with their care and personal needs. Torres is actively involved in nursing committees. He is the unit representative to the Safe Patient Handling (SPH) Peer Leader Committee. He is a strong advocate for patient safety and is committed to working towards a "No Lift"

environment that promotes the safety of our patients across all areas of care. He is continually seeking to improve his job skills and has a personal goal to obtain his RN degree. He participates in educational opportunities and is always ready to assist with new unit projects and activities.

Torres can be counted on to do his job and renders outcomes that are of the highest quality. He is a knowledgeable, dedicated and compassionate member of our healthcare team. Jose Torres is an invaluable asset to the 3B Patient Care Team and the Phoenix VAHCS.

**Krystal Matherly, License Practical Nurse** is a compassionate and dedicated member of our health care team on the night shift of Ward 2C. Matherly maintains high nursing standards by consistently placing our Veteran's safety and personal care needs first. She demonstrates excellent communication skills, organizational ability, and a consistent professional mannerism. She works closely with her Team Leader to establish a plan of care for each patient with the goal of achieving positive outcomes during their hospital stay. She openly confers with the RNs during her tour of duty, keeping them informed of any changes in her patient's status and discussing the plan of care.

Matherly is a true patient advocate and firmly believes that by reducing anxiety and promoting comfort the rate of each patient's healing process will increase. She takes an active role in pain control management and in the prevention of skin breakdown. She makes recommendations to her team leader when her patient's condition and

needs warrant an adjustment of their pain medication regimen or when routine prevention measures prove inadequate for maintaining skin integrity. She will request a consult to the Wound/Ostomy NP so that measures that are more intensive can be assessed and initiated. It is also very important to her that her patients are kept informed of any new medication, appointment, or procedure in an effort to reduce their anxiety during their hospital stay.

Krystal Matherly maintains a positive work attitude and is consistently recognized by her co-workers for her true compassion towards our Veterans by providing excellent patient care all the times. She is never too busy to assist patients, families, and other staff members.

The following are statements of respect and acknowledgment from fellow co-workers that best describe Matherly's excellence in nursing: "Dependable in completing her job, using a high level of problem solving skills."

"Krystal is proactive in the care of patients, always putting them first and delivering the highest level of care."

"Krystal demonstrates good interpersonal skills and is able to work with her peers without difficulty, voicing her concerns and demonstrating the ability to have appropriate discussions regarding patient needs."

"Krystal always shows up for her shift and is prepared to work with a positive attitude." "Is here for the patient and provides a high level of professional care."

"Is dependable and compassionate."

"Enjoys her job and the ability to help patients."

Krystal Matherly takes initiative to improving and advancing her skills and is currently completing pre-requisites toward her nursing degree.

**Ruth Ann Dacy, RN** has dedicated the past 10 years of her career to serving our nation's Veterans here at the Phoenix VA Health Care System. Dacy is an invaluable member of the Operating Room (OR) Team. She consistently demon-



Dr. James Robbins, Interim Medical Center Director, Guillermo "Jose" Torres, Nursing Assistant, and Dr. Nancy Clafflin, Associate Director Patient Care Services.





Dr. Nancy Clafflin, Associate Director Patient Care Services, Krystal Matherly, LPN and Dr. James Robbins, Interim Medical Center Director.

strates her knowledge of evidence-based practice and applies it to projects and activities that enhance health care outcomes and improve organizational performance. She is a true collaborator demonstrating her ability to work across services and professions. She emulates professional integrity and adheres to the nursing's code of ethics throughout her daily practice and interventions. Through her volunteer work in the community, she promotes a positive image of the nursing profession and of VA Nurses.

Dacy demonstrates leadership in developing a productive working relationship with her peers on the Moderate Sedation Task Force team creating a revised Policy and Procedure, a CPRS template and educational programs for the entire hospital. Outcomes of this task force affect patient safety, documentation compliance and staff preparation. This task force continues to oversee projects by implementing updates and reviewing charts that monitor change effectiveness and barriers to care.

Dacy also demonstrated her expertise in vascular nursing practice when she addressed the endovascular disposable supplies and stent purchase/stock usage needs in the OR. Dacy discovered that the OR had many endovascular disposable and implantable items, i.e. stents, diagnostic catheters, balloon, wires, etc. that were outdated prior to usage. She discovered that Interventional Radiology had similar stock supplies. She then developed a plan to incorporate the two departments' supplies and services in an effort to minimize waste and to have the

necessary supplies on hand for interventional procedures at all times.

Our Phoenix VA is the first medical center in the nation to develop a consignment agreement with Atrium. Dacy successfully negotiated the consignment of stents for Phoenix. This method of consigning products has the potential

to save the PVAHCS thousands of dollars annually, along with eliminating the cost of outdated product and delegating the stocking and updating of product technology to the vendor versus the facility. This project eliminated duplication of supplies and services, streamlined inventory, reduced acquisition costs – ultimately providing a better stent product and timely care to the Veteran. Her work on the Atrium consignment project demonstrates her ability reach beyond the needs of the OR collaborating effectively with staff from multiple disciplines.

Dacy constantly advocates for patient safety. She developed a line of reporting excessive radiation exposure of the surgical patient. As the recognized expert in this area, she is responsible for maintaining the Radiation Safety Program for the OR and in giving expert advice on how to protect our Veterans from receiving unintentional exposure.

She is also an advisor to the new GYN Team Leader for the surgical specialty in the OR. She assisted with analyzing situational difficulties and brainstorming about possible remedies. She assisted them in overcoming direct care issues unique to the female

population and in educating them on surgical processes. Dacy allowed venting of frustrations as well as kind thoughts of acceptance. She mentored her colleagues in choosing appropriate behaviors and fostering universal acceptance of the female Veteran.

Dacy has volunteered at a local charity whose contributions and donations went to Phoenix's Marines, Army, Navy, Air force (MANA) house. MANA house is a home organized to assist homeless Veterans. Besides helping with the serving of the fellow volunteers and Veterans, Dacy greeted the Veterans and spoke with them about the benefits of receiving health care and assistance through VA programs. She also functioned as an expert in her clinical practice when volunteering to assist with the annual Women Veteran's Health Fair. Here she provided hands-on-care and recruited a fellow RN to offer a presentation on poisoning and animal bites. The Women Veteran's Health Fair serviced more than 100 women Veterans enabling them to receive health screenings, seminars and information on services offered throughout the Medical Center.

In addition to earning honors as the PVAHCS Nurse of the Year, Ruth Ann Dacy is also the VISN 18 Nurse of the Year.

Congratulations to all our Nurses for their outstanding care and support of our nation's Veterans. ■



Dr. Nancy Clafflin, Associate Director Patient Care Services, Ruth Ann Dacy, RN, LPN and Dr. James Robbins, Interim Medical Center Director.

# EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

By Victor L. Nickson, PSA Turquoise Clinic

## April

We congratulate Madge Monzingo, Secretary to the Associate Director, on being selected as the April 2011 Employee of the Month. Her motto is "The achievements of an organization are reflected not

only in an individual's efforts but in their attitudes."

Madge Monzingo has been described as organized, task oriented, a team player, a take-charge supporter, the pulse, the catalyst, an

example of exceptional customer service, and the go-to person, who has earned the respect of administrative service chiefs.

Monzingo performs with distinction, providing guidance to new chiefs, lend-

ing a helping hand, without prompting, by anticipating the need. For example, when hiring questions arise she proactively researches the Executive Resource Board minutes to validate the hiring authority.

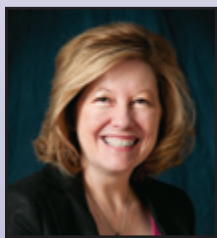
The word multi-tasking is in force for Monzingo. She does a yeoman's job of, taking accurate minutes for six meetings each month (two Executive Resource Boards, two telephone task groups, the Administrative Quality Board and the Occupational Health Council); acclimating new chiefs to the culture of the Phoenix VA Healthcare System, notifying chiefs of discovered issues, confirming information, and illuminating for correction, inconsistencies, and policy conflicts.

Monzingo updates the chiefs of the dates and times of meetings, due dates

on controlled correspondence, project deadlines, and information required by the Associate Director or the VISN. In short, she respects others, and is one of the driving forces behind the Associate Director's support service. Additionally, she conducts courteous interactions with customers; handles conflict in a professional manner; and is open to feedback and ideas from those with whom she meets.

Monzingo is dedicated and can be counted on to have her work done correctly and on time; and to provide growth opportunities for others; by, for example, having volunteers stand for her during leave opportunities.

She strives for her best, which raises the bar. She is a guardian of trust for patients, co-workers and those senior to her. ■



Madge Monzingo

## May

We congratulate Guillermo (Jose) Torres, Ward 3B Nurse's Aide, on being selected the 2011 May Employee of the Month.

The patients trust that he will be responsive and Torres does not disappoint. The following is just one example of his responsiveness. Torres will take it upon himself to rearrange room furniture and equipment, post-

op, in preparation for patient arrival, while leaving the patient's personal effects, and phones within easy reach for their comfort. This means a lot to our Veterans.

Torres has earned the respect of seniors, peers, subordinates, patients, their friends and families. He has worked in the health field for 10 years, and during that time has volunteered to be the Safe Patient Handling (SPH) Peer Leader Committee unit representative.

In addition, he is committed to working towards a "No Lift" environment and in promoting patient safety. Further, Torres is also responsible for equipment training and the validating of staff competencies related to lift equipment.

He has demonstrated his excellence about our Veterans. As an example, Veterans tell his superiors that Torres has a personal commitment to them. He makes each of them feel welcome. Torres always greets his patients with a

smile and a friendly greeting. As another example, even before the PACU nurse finishes giving the report to the assigned RN, Torres is present taking the vital signs and comforting our Veterans.

Torres is continually seeking to improve his job skills. He is currently attending school to get his RN degree. In addition, Torres has won numerous accolades and Pride Awards.

He is compassionate. He listens to the Veterans concerns, with an open heart and helps them by directing their needs through the RN to appropriate services. Our staff tell us that Jose Torres achieves the highest best results through hard work, dedication, and compassionate to customer service. ■



Guillermo (Jose) Torres

# Meet your Friendly Hospital Dietitians

By Bridgette Henness

The word diet comes from Greek *Diaita* meaning way of life. Imhotep, credited as the first doctor in Egypt, used food as medicine approximately 6,000 years ago. The Indian tradition of Ayurvedic (complete knowledge for long life) documented nutrition as part of the path to good health 2,500 years ago. The science of nutrition started flourishing during the Age of Enlightenment or 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

Registered Dietitians (RD's) are the nutrition experts of the modern day. RD's apply the science of nutrition to diagnose, treat and prevent human diseases caused by deficiency, excess, or metabolic imbalance of nutrients. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) requires dietitians to meet specific educational requirements, including completion of a bachelor's degree,

dietetic internship and taking a national registration exam. Dietetics work in a variety of settings:

- Clinical staff in health care facilities to match proper nutrition requirements to the medical problem.
- Community staff applies wellness programs and coordinate nutritional programs in public health agencies (resorts, daycares, etc.)
- Foodservice staff prepares large-scale menus, coordinate, assess and plan foodservices (prisons, restaurants, etc.) They also train food service workers and are sanitation experts.
- Gerontological staff is specialists in nutrition as it applies to aging. They oversee nutrition in nursing homes.
- Pediatric staff provides nutrition for children and young adolescents.

- Research staff explores how nutrition affects the human body in healthy, malnourished and diseased state.
- Administrative staff manages dietetic departments (hire, train, supervise and apply procedures and policies of nutrition.)
- Business/media staff are resources for business, marketing and communications. Their nutritional expertise is solicited by the media for cooking shows, recipe development, etc.

Anyone desiring a class to learn about making changes for healthier lifestyle can take a class from our knowledgeable dietitians. We have classes in diabetes, heart-healthy eating, weight loss and cooking classes for any Veteran or family member. Look for them on our website at [www.phoenix.va.gov](http://www.phoenix.va.gov) under the calendar option. ■

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## How VA Services Can Change Lives

By Dianna Suslo, LCSW

*(Editor's note: the patient's name was changed to protect her privacy)*

Betty is an Air Force Veteran who served from 1979-1983. She was proud to have served her country, and of her accomplishments, but while in the service, she suffered two sexual attacks that left her with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from Military Sexual Trauma (MST). After being in the service, Betty went through a violent marriage and lost a baby to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. She had nightmares, flashbacks, and mood instability. She turned to substance abuse to deal with the pain.

As her symptoms got worse, she found it harder and harder to work as the years went on. She also has a chronic pain problem in her hips and back; the result of a fall during her service, and years of Certified Nursing Assistant work.

"I did not know what was happening to me," she said.

Betty became homeless in May of 2006. She went through the inpatient

and outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Programs at the Carl T Hayden Medical Center in 2007. During this time, Betty was putting her life back together.

"If I had not come to terms with my MST, recovery would not have been possible," she said.

She received help with substance abuse, back pain, and trauma.

Betty did not have the financial resources to pay for housing. She also wanted to help her son, who (now, 19 years old) was living with his sister who is two years older. They barely had enough money to cover basic needs. Betty was unable to help them due to her circumstances.

So housing for Betty was provided through the Housing and Urban Development/VA Subsidized Housing program in 2009.

Even though this was a help it was difficult for Betty at first, because her

only source of income was her general assistance, which was cut due to the housing grant.

She subsided on zero income for a number of months. But recently her benefits from the VA for PTSD came through. She felt that she was finally being validated for what she went through in the military.

"If it was not for taking advantage of the programs of the VA, I would not be here," said Betty.

Betty has now been clean and sober for four years. She is moving in to a two-bedroom apartment, so her son can live with her while pursuing his education. She also has a close relationship with her daughter and grandson.

Betty is now ready to take her life to the next level. She is pursuing recreational and social activities. With the help of the VA, she is feeling better emotionally, and has the basic resources she needs to live comfortably. ■



# The New Training Portal – Talent Management System is Here!

By Joan Etzenhouser



## 1. New Terminology

- The new system will now be called the VA Talent Management System (TMS)
- The Learning Plan is being renamed To-Do List
- The Learning History will now be referred to as Completed Work

## 2. New User Interface

- Easy navigation of key links, shortcuts and common functions
- User-friendly and intuitive
- Up-to-date look and feel

## 3. Enhancements to Commonly Used Functions

- Familiar actions are now available right from the **home** tab, fewer clicks are required to access content
- New single login screen for users and administrators
- User ID no longer case sensitive—that's a big improvement for

logging in

- “System check” link shows you if the correct software is installed on your computer, reduces error messages and Help Desk calls
- Top menu tabs allow quick access to tasks related to your role
- Catalog Search is available right from the **home** tab
- Welcome pop-up screen provides quick links to flagged courses, “TMS News”, and training events.
- Easy Links on the **home** tab make navigation to useful activities quick and easy

## 4. New To-Do List Located on the home Tab

- The majority of end user tasks can be completed from the To-Do list right on the **home** tab
- To-Do List shows all your tasks in one place

- Completed work status button provides a view of progress on learning activities, and quick access to print certificates
- Capability to hover over course listings for more information on scheduled offerings, as well as links to details

## 5. Additional Features

- Enhanced calendar support
- Use bookmarks as shortcuts to quickly find frequently used items
- Ability to view training available at local and national levels

## 6. Training

- The new TMS is more user-friendly than the LMS, so many of you will be able to navigate the system without additional training
- There is more information, videos, and training guides under the on the **New! TMS** link on the Education Webpage. ■

# Help Us Reduce Mailing Costs

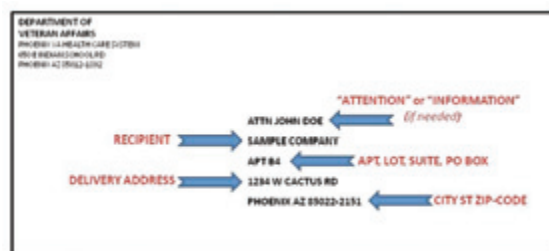
By Steve Bowers, Warehouse Supervisor

Mailroom officials at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) remind employees about the specific formatting requirements they must use when addressing outgoing mail.

Employees creating envelopes or mailing labels must:

- Type the address/label using all capital letters
  - Use a plain, 10- or 12-point font
  - Omit all punctuation (except the “plus 4” zip code hyphen)
  - Use only approved abbreviations
- Address information must be in a particular order as well.
- The **first line** should contain the name of the recipient.

- The **second line** contains the PO Box, apartment, lot or suite number.
- The **third line** is for the street address. **Do not** put two physical addresses on an envelope i.e. PO Box and Street Address.
- The **final line** should have the city, state and “plus 4” zip code. If instructions as to whom a mail item should be directed, such as an “attention” or “information” line, is required, that information should go in a line above the recipient's name. See sample above.



Remember, All “official” outgoing mail must be processed by the mailroom.

Employees can also review A&MM Policy 90-10, which has additional information or contact the mailroom with questions.

To arrange for training on these and other mailroom procedures please contact either Steve Bowers or lead mail clerk John Gilchrist, at ext. 2938 or in Outlook through the “vhaphomailroom” mail group. ■

# Do Your Part: Help By Recycling

By: Bridgette Henness

**B**ob Carlson, our Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Coordinator, is a wealth of information on recycling. Our facility recycles more than you think. Did you know that in 2010 we had 67,546 gallons of water waste? This is a 52% reduction from 2009. How did we do this? By upgrading our plumbing with on demand hot water units.

Some of our recycling efforts can generate income for our general fund. Some have no gain or loss but if they make good sense we strive to be environmentally friendly. An example is the wood we recycled. We kept 13,000 pounds of wood (pallets/ wood furniture, crates and lumber) out of the landfill. Additionally 1,900 gallons of cooking oil and 3,000 pounds of textiles (mattresses and all of the towels we saved by using them for cleaning rags) were recycled.

Some recycling costs money to be green. For example, 572,404 pounds of white office paper cost us .69 to securely shred. This cost can be reduced if we separate patient sensitive paper from our regular paper. Regular paper is not shred as fine and costs less. New nationwide regulations mandates paper recycle bins to be reduced to 39 gallons, so Carlson is purchasing smaller containers divided into recycle and shred bins. Purchasing these containers is estimated to save \$30,000 the first year.

Recycling corrugated cardboard provides income for our general fund. We made \$6,123 on 102,040 pounds. Ferrous metal made \$9,879 on 100,980 pounds. Non-ferrous metal (drink cans, brass, copper, lead, and appliances) made \$455 on 650 pounds. If everyone recycled one drink can/ bottle could you imagine how much that would provide with more than 2,000 employees? Recycle bins are by most of the vending machines to make it convenient.

Did you also know that we have several greenhouse projects at our facility? Honeywell helped with donations for the one near building 23. It is horticultural therapy. It is recycling coffee grounds,



*PVAHCS Greenhouse*

grass clippings and recycling rainwater. Ruby Sheffer is the go to person for these projects.

Even the sun helps us go green. In the first week of March, 40% of all the power used by our VA facility was generated by the solar panels already up. Could you imagine how much it will save when all panels are in place and if we had a battery to store extra energy for nighttime? We are nearly mercury free here. Carlson has been replacing the thermometers that research uses. As each department space is renovated, both asbestos and mercury are removed.

Getting more for your money right now is not always the best way to save money. The hard part is planning 10 years in the future and taking into account what you might do with the space as you grow. Sometimes you spend a little more now so that you do not spend a lot more then.

A good example would be to pay a million for a concrete pad for a storage area floor when there is a possibility that it will be used for offices later. Spend a little more to put down water pipes and electrical lines now so you will not have to rip up the floor in 10 years to do it and then have to replace the million-dollar floor.

You can do your part by recycling, and supporting VA's efforts to improve our environment through effective use of our resources. ■

## Nurses are like Rocks

*(In honor of Nurses Week 2011)*

Nurses are like rocks,  
They come in different sizes,  
forms and colors;  
They are shaped and reshaped in a  
length of time.  
Nurses are like rocks,  
They are diverse in their character  
and nature;  
They are important because of  
their value  
And their gift to humankind.  
Nurses are like rocks,  
They are beautiful;  
They add sparkle to life.  
Nurses are like rocks,  
They are powerful against the  
challenges of nature;  
They create a satisfying harmony  
that influences its qualities.  
Rocks embrace the change of  
turbulent winds and waves;  
They grow bigger and stronger to  
unify their glory.  
Nurses too embrace the  
transformation of their trends;  
They become experts as they  
contribute to the Nursing  
Profession.  
Nurses' dedication and spirit of  
unity make a powerful nursing  
foundation.  
A foundation so strong it, like  
rocks, molds and endures any  
element over the years,  
Maintaining its realistic mission  
and vision for many years to come.

What kind of a "ROCK" are you?  
Big or small your contribution  
built the Foundation of the  
Phoenix VA Health Care System  
Nursing Department

*Thank you for your hard work  
and dedication*



## Smoking Effects on Veterans Diagnosed with HIV

Riana Homeric, BSN, RN

Smoking can be attributed to 400,000 deaths per year in the United States alone (Bayer, 2006). Veterans diagnosed with HIV who smoke have health issues that are greatly exacerbated due to weakened immune systems increasing their susceptibility to illnesses (Navaho and Cooperman, 2009). These Veterans are at a 53% increased risk of death compared to non-smokers. Decreased immune function, increases risks by 36% that these Veterans will contract a condition related to acquired autoimmune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) (Reynolds, 2009). The Veterans Aging Cohort 5 Site Study (VACS5) confirmed the increase in morbidity and mortality in Veterans with HIV who continue to smoke (Crothers, 2009). Veterans diagnosed with HIV deserve healthcare they can count on and education that assists them in becoming proactive in reaching optimal health by kicking their tobacco habit.

The Veterans Health Administration has a lengthy history of promoting smoking cessation among Veterans (Institute of Medicine, 2009). Smoking cessation programs are currently offered at VA and are available to all Veterans. However, Veterans diagnosed with HIV have a minimal chance of being successful in the current smoking cessation program because of multiple complicated issues they face. Depression

and self-efficacy, anxiety, poly-substance abuse and psycho-social factors along with the stigmatization associated with an HIV diagnosis make Veterans hesitant to discuss their health concerns openly. Antiretroviral therapy medication increases the risk of myocardial infarction as does smoking. These factors all tend to weaken the chances that this population will be successful when it comes to smoking cessation. These smokers tend to discount health risks associated with smoking believing short life expectancy from an HIV diagnosis will deter them from experiencing smoking-related health issues (Viridine, 2009).

VA Medical Centers are the nation's largest health provider to military members and Veterans diagnosed with HIV. Smoking among persons diagnosed with HIV range between 50-70% compared to 21% of the general population (Webb, Vanable, Carey and Blair, 2009). Smoking and HIV are both preventable and on the rise. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have identified several chronic diseases that threaten to bankrupt our healthcare system which include HIV and most of the comorbidities associated with smoking (Goldstein, 2009). Clinical gains in the control of the HIV illness have made huge strides with the highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) era creating a significant decline in illnesses (Navaho, et al, 2009). However,



Riana Homeric

this progress significantly increases negative consequences on persons who continue to smoke after they are diagnosed with HIV (Crothers, 2009).

Specialized smoking cessation education intervention for Veterans diagnosed with HIV is a critical need within VA. An environment where discussions can take place without stigma attached will help Veterans diagnosed with HIV feel supported and assists in areas that focus on resolution to complicated issues within this population. Implementing specialized smoking cessation programs for Veterans diagnosed with HIV not only offers a better quality of life, it is a cost-effective solution to budget constraints as well. ■



# We Honor our Law Enforcement Officers During National Law Enforcement Week

By VA Police Officer Hector Barahona



*"It is not how these officers died that made them heroes, it is how they lived."*

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, Washington, D.C.

These few words have been created to honor the men and women of Law Enforcement who have lost their lives or have been injured in the line of duty. These men and women served with pride and honor. Regardless of the foundations they may have started from, they now share a common brotherhood... "Law Enforcement." They are Law Enforcement Officers... In addition, they will never be forgotten. For they have paid the ultimate sacrifice while keeping our communities safe. These men and women were and forever will be ... "Protectors of Our Kingdom."

Law Enforcement Officers have dedicated themselves to serve humankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the Constitutional rights of all persons to liberty, equality and justice. Above all... these men and women have dedicated themselves before God to their chosen profession... Law Enforcement.

## May 15<sup>th</sup> - Law Enforcement Memorial Day - Law Enforcement Week

About 150-180 officers are killed in the line of duty each year and their families and co-workers are left to cope with the tragic loss. Many businesses and community members across the nation will lower their flags in remembrance of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation, which designated May 15 as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as Police Week. Currently, tens of thousands

of law enforcement officers from around the world converge on Washington, DC to participate in a number of planned events which honor those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

## The VA Police serve those that have served our country and every day is Veterans Day.

The **VA Protective Service** was established in 1930, which was also the same year that the Veterans Administration was founded. The **VA Protective Service** was placed in charge of maintaining order, protecting persons and property, and ensuring fire safety. As the VA evolved, the fire safety role was turned over to the Engineering Service and the Protective Service became a security guard force.

Due to the changing needs of the VA and an increase in police-related matters, the President and Congress decided to abolish the guard force and established the **United States Department of Veterans Affairs Police** in 1973.

The agency has expanded in size since its inception and it now constitutes the second largest uniformed federal police agency in the United States.

Today's **United States Department of Veterans Affairs Police** is the uniformed police service Department of Veterans Affairs, responsible for the protection of the VA Medical Centers and other Facilities operated by Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Health Administration.

The VA Police are a specialized armed enforcement and protective service entity by design that operate in and around the various Veterans Affairs Medical Center Facilities located in all fifty states to include Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The VA Police are among many various Federal Law Enforcement Agencies, with authority to enforce federal laws, VA rules and regulations, and to make arrests on VA controlled property.

The agency's motto is **"To Protect Those Who Served"**

## Line-Of-Duty Deaths

Seven VA Police Officers have died in the line of duty:

Police Officer Marvin C. Bland

End of Watch: Friday,

September 6, 1985

Cause of Death: Automobile accident  
Bedford, Massachusetts

Police Officer Leonard B. Wilcox

End of Watch: Friday,

January 31, 1986

Cause of Death: Gunfire  
Brecksville, Ohio

Police Officer Mark S. Decker

End of Watch: Friday,

January 31, 1986

Cause of Death: Gunfire  
Brecksville, Ohio

Police Officer Ronald Hearn

End of Watch: Monday, July 25, 1988

Cause of Death: Gunfire  
New York City, New York

Police Officer Gary A. Ross

End of Watch: Monday,

December 24, 1990

Cause of Death: Heart attack  
Washington, D.C.

Police Officer Horst Harold Woods

End of Watch: Wednesday,

January 10, 1996

Cause of Death: Gunfire  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Police Officer Jose Oscar

Rodriguez-Reyes

End of Watch: Wednesday,

April 24, 2002

Cause of Death: Gunfire  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

We thank all our former and current VA Police Officers for their efforts in providing a safe and secure environment for our staff and patients. ■

# Honor Flight Arizona – A Trip of a Lifetime

By: Merrilyn Collins, LCSW

The World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. was completed in 2004, and was largely funded by private donations. In 2005, a program called Honor Flight started in Ohio, with the goal of bringing as many WWII Veterans as possible to see their memorial. Most states now have an Honor Flight program. A small group of dedicated individuals in the Prescott area formed Arizona's Honor flight in 2007.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to help a World War II Veteran, Ray Quintilian, apply for Honor Flight. Quintiliano enlisted in the Marines at the age of 18 and fought in the Pacific Theatre, including the battles of Iwo Jima, Guam, and Guadalcanal. Now 88, he has experienced nightmares from his WWII combat experiences throughout his life. He only started receiving treatment for PTSD in 2005, after returning to the U.S. from Mexico, where he lived for twelve years.

In March of this year, he received word that it was his turn to be on the Honor Flight. He was thrilled and ready to go! Fortunately, he is very healthy for his age, ambulatory, and of sound mind. From Brooklyn, N.Y., he is Italian with a charismatic personality and a great sense of humor.

On April 26, a group of twenty-seven WWII Veterans and their "guardians", volunteers who are each responsible for five or six Veterans, flew out of Sky Harbor Airport to Baltimore, where we stayed at an accommodating Hilton Hotel. At the Baltimore Airport, our Veterans were greeted with applause from Honor Flight Veterans from that area, as well as military groups and other airline passengers – a very pleasant surprise for the Arizonans. All were thrilled by the enthusiastic reception.

Wednesday was a very full day, starting with a tour of the Capitol. There were snipers visible on the roof, a sobering sign of the times in which we live. Other sights included the Navy Memorial, the Vietnam and Korean Memorials, and the World War II Memorial, where a guardian conducted a ceremony of remembrance for the attendees. That memorial is

beautifully designed and is a fitting tribute to "the greatest generation". We then went to the Iwo Jima Memorial, which Quintilian said was an accurate depiction of the battle scene. He was very moved by it.

"The rocks on the ground (of the statue) look just like the rocks of Iwo Jima," he said. The day's activities ended with the ceremonial changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Veterans were from all branches of the military. Some of the guardians were their adult sons and daughters. One family was represented by three generations, the youngest wearing his active military uniform, accompanying their WWII patriarch. The group was greeted with applause wherever they went, and often thanked for their service.

One of the Veterans had pneumonia three times during the past year, is on oxygen, and receives Hospice services. He said that his doctor didn't want him to go on this trip but he responded "I'll go or I'll die trying!" His guardian called the Veteran "my adopted dad".

On the return flight to Phoenix, the pilot announced the presence of the Honor Flight group to the other passengers, who applauded them. He mentioned that the group included an Iwo Jima Veteran and another who was in the Battle of the Bulge. A Woman passenger asked to speak with Quintilian stating that her husband was also at Iwo Jima and later died at age 25 with rheumatic fever, contracted during his military service. She said "You really never get over it." She talked with Ray Quintilian for a little while and was very moved by the experience.

Upon arrival back at Sky Harbor, the Veterans were greeted by a uniformed group of children from the Civil Air Patrol, saluting them as they walked into



*Ray Quintilian at WWII Memorial*

the airport. A Color Guard from the American Legion in Peoria also saluted them with a brief ceremony. Other airline passengers in the terminal and Honor Guard supporters applauded them as they walked through the airport. Quintilian was gratified by all the support, and returned the greetings with a "Rocky" salute.

The whole trip was a very rewarding experience for the Veterans and their guardians. There were many individuals and groups who supported the trip, including the Veterans' Medical Leadership Council of Phoenix. This was truly the trip of a lifetime for these wonderful Veterans and the guardians who were privileged to accompany them.

Interestingly, and a very positive sign for our nation's future, school children are some of the biggest supporters to Honor Flight organizations across the country.

For more information about Honor Flight Arizona, visit [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org). ■



# Disabled Veterans Conquer the Slopes at the Winter Sports Clinic

By Eva Gergely, Blind Rehab Specialist

Three Veterans from the Carl T. Hayden's VA Medical Center embarked on a journey to Snowmass, Colorado to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, sponsored by Phoenix VA National Recreation Committee and Fountain Hills Sons of Amvets. Each Veteran had different challenges and goals to conquer during the weeklong event.

The clinic helps to tear down any barriers Veterans face on a daily basis and gives them hope to live an active and rewarding life when they return home. The clinic promotes rehabilitation by teaching Veterans how to participate in downhill and cross-country skiing despite their disability. Alternate activities are available that allow Veterans to experience other adventures such as scuba diving, pistol shooting, fly fishing, sled hockey, and rock climbing. This clinic is one of several National recreation events hosted by the Veteran Administration.

During the clinic, disabled Veterans draw inner strength from this experience and interaction with other Veterans in the same situation. For Mark Israel, a blind Veteran, his favorite part of the clinic is "the experience of being around the fellowship and comrades with fellow brothers."

For many of these Veterans after an injury they lose their confidence in themselves and what they can do says Israel. "The clinic has really helped me overcome a loss of confidence and that makes a big difference."

Navy Veteran Christopher Clemens, who suffered a traumatic Brain Injury, skied down Aspen's biggest hill by himself. The mountain topped at 13,500 feet above sea level. When Clemens trekked down the mountain he said, "I've never felt that much freedom and happiness since my injury."

This experience has motivated him to find different resources through the VA and the community to continue recreation and sporting activities to help him stay active and healthy.

Coach Eva Gergely, who is a Low Vision and Mobility Orientation Specialist, assisted the three Veterans. Her job was to ensure that each Veteran got to their event and experience everything available to reach their goals and full potential. As part of the continuing education series offered at the clinic Gergely also hosted an in-service on "How to Assist a Blind or Visually Impaired Veteran." This in-service was designed to improve awareness to others on the important of how to interact and communicate with a Blind or Visually Impaired Veteran allowing them to continue to be independent. Her updates on the Veterans progress became posts on the Phoenix VA social media sites for Facebook and Twitter.

At the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) a team of Blind Rehabilitation Specialist start with a patient centered approach that includes primary care, Ophthalmology, Low Vision Optometry, social work, audiology and other services. This interdisciplinary approach helps visually impaired Veterans get on track to rehabilitation and greater independence.

The PVAHCS also has an Advanced Low Vision Clinic that serves Veterans who still have some sight but struggle with reading and mobility. This clinic teaches them about their eye conditions and provides them with low vision tools to help them remain independent. These include magnifiers, talking clocks, closed circuit video magnifiers, special sunglasses and much more.

The programs also include outpatient rehabilitation services in Veterans' homes, as well as referrals to a world-class VA inpatient rehab center located at the Tucson Southern Arizona VA Health Care system.



*Ricardo Renteria, Christopher Clemens, Mark Israel*

The largest portion of the nearly 50,000 Veterans nationwide who are visually impaired, are those age 55 and older, who are losing their eyesight due to diseases like macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Blind or visually impaired Veterans interested in referral to any of the aforementioned programs should contact Tom Hicks, VIST Coordinator, at 602-277-5551, extension 7236.

The weeklong event has made a large impact on the three Veterans lives, as they look forward to continuing to participate in other National Recreational events and community events in the future. You can learn more about VA's National Recreation Events at <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/wsc/index.asp>.

The VA National Recreation Events Committee is thankful to Larry Artes and AmVets of Fountain Hills for their generous support to assist with the Veterans travel. Potential donors can support these events by making a check payable to VA General Post Fund (GPF) 9961 National Recreation Events, c/o PVAHCS, Voluntary Department (135), 650 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix AZ 85012. ■



# How PVAHCS Ties Into the National VA Research Mission Part 2

By Angela (Boyd) Kuramoto

*(Editor's note: We have seven labs in our VA Research Department. In the March/April issue, we highlighted three of our labs and in this issue, we will highlight the other four.)*

Research at a VA facility is a multifaceted collaborative effort that strives to not only advance science and improve the lives of everyone but specifically to cater to our nation's Veterans that have defended our country and liberties through their sacrifice. VA operates an outstanding medical research program that has made significant progress in improving rehabilitation for Veterans and in the treatment of numerous health problems for the entire population.

VA is a world leader in such areas as research on aging, women Veterans' health issues, AIDS, and post-traumatic stress disorder. VA researchers have played key roles in eradicating tuberculosis; improving artificial limbs; and developing the CT scan and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which facilitates safe removal of brain tumors.

VA contributions to medical knowledge have won VA scientists many prestigious awards, including two Nobel Prizes. Did you know that it was a VA that developed and implanted the first cardiac pacemaker? Or that the VA has received frequent international recognition including Nobel Prize awards to VA employees for work in hypertension, organ transplants, mental illness, spinal cord injury and alcoholism?

In the previous issue of the Desert Sun (March/April) we highlighted three of our research labs. In this issue we will highlight the other four.

**Reaven laboratory: Lab personnel: Dr. Peter Reaven, Dr. Eric Schwartz, William Zhang, Juraj Koska, Dr. Iyad Syoufi, Sabine Borwege**

People who have diabetes or "pre-diabetes" have a greatly increased risk of heart disease compared to healthy

people. Prescriptions for regular heart medications do give them some help, but even with that help, they still have a very high risk of heart disease that simply is not caused by "normal" risk factors such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

Our laboratory uses both cell culture methods and experiments with human volunteers to look for new, poorly-studied risk factors which may help explain this link, such as high triglyceride fats, high free fatty acids, and inflammation of the white blood cells called monocytes and macrophages. We also study existing, FDA-approved medicines, to see if they can be used in new ways to treat the complications of diabetes.

We have ongoing trials to see if the diabetes medicine Exenatide can help treat the blood fat abnormalities associated with diabetes, in addition to the elevated blood glucose levels for which it is currently used; and the arthritis medication Salsalate, to see if it can improve insulin sensitivity similar to dedicated diabetes medicines, but at lower cost and with a favorable safety profile. We also investigate the molecular signaling pathways in the cells by which diabetes causes damage, in order to find new targets for drug therapy.

Our current studies include:

Exposing laboratory-grown cells to free fatty acid levels similar to the blood of people with diabetes;

Feeding people meals containing different types of fat;

And studying whether several existing approved medications, normally used for other conditions, may also help treat the heart disease risk factors of diabetes, and hopefully prevent the progression of diabetes itself.

**Permana laboratory: Lab personnel: Dr. Paska Permana, Didio Martinez, Wuqiong Ma**

Obesity is a major risk factor for insulin resistance that can lead to metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and heart disease.



Inflammation appears to link obesity and the above diseases. This inflammation is characterized by high levels of inflammatory factors in blood. Fat tissue releases many of these factors into blood. The production levels of these factors vary in different fat depots and increase in inflamed fat tissue.

Our laboratory studies the regulation of inflammation in fat tissue/cells and ways to prevent and/or treat the inflammation. To do this, we use cultured cells as well as fat tissue donated by patients undergoing surgery. Currently, our projects include:

Studying how conditions typically found in obesity, such as high levels of fatty acids, prompt fat tissue/cells to produce high levels of inflammatory factors.

Determining which common or new medications can prevent inflammation in fat tissue/cells, and how this is done.

These research projects will help people better understand the role of fat tissue in obesity related diseases, and may lead to new targets of prevention or treatment of these diseases.

**Robbins/Hayden laboratory: Lab personnel: Rick Robbins, MD and John Hayden, PhD**

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a major problem that afflicts our Veterans. This condition may arise from smoking, in association with emphysema, but can also occur with other lung diseases. This condition results in difficulty of breathing due to the closure of small airway passages in the lung.

Our lab is interested in mechanisms that are involved in the development

of COPD. One of the major processes associated with this condition is the migration of cells in to the lung that produce and propagate inflammation. We are trying to discover new therapeutics that may block this activity. We are also interested in the development of new bioassays that may be useful to monitor the level of inflammation in the lungs.

Current studies include:

The examination of novel effects of the bronchodilator Spiriva™ (tiotropium bromide) on blocking inflammatory events in lung cells, thus leading to improved lung function.

The study of how inflammatory responses in the lung may contribute to the modification of important regulatory proteins and change their activity.

The discovery of new non-evasive biomarkers to monitor the status of lung inflammation.

#### **Franco Laboratory: Lab Personnel: Dr. Daniel A. Franco**

People with type 2 diabetes do not benefit from the conventional lipid lowering treatments available. Because they are obese (80%) and have high triglyceride values, we hypothesize that their vascular complications (i.e. atherosclerosis) are due mainly to the low inflammatory state due to the excess visceral fat that triggers the hepatic secretion of high amounts of TG-rich lipoprotein.

We are using highly specific purification methods to separate the TG-containing lipoprotein families in our quest to identify which ones are the most pro-inflammatory. In this way, new treatments can be developed which will address specifically these problems in people with type 2 diabetes.

We will get blood samples from healthy controls and from diabetic patients and isolate the apoB-containing lipoproteins. These will be tested in a cell culture in vitro system (using peripheral blood monocyte-derived macrophages) for their capacity to induce inflammation.

Our research should shed new light on why type 2 diabetics do not respond to conventional lipid-lowering therapies and help us in designing new treatment strategies for these patients. ■

## Have You Found the Hero in You?

By: Bridgette Henness

Leslie Johnson, is our Superhero who plans, promotes and organizes six blood drives a year (a full year in advance). This is an important job because Arizona needs 700 donors daily to meet hospital demands locally. Blood cannot be created. Keeping enough blood to meet demand is challenging because although 38% of the population is eligible to give, only 5% do so. Giving whole blood helps three people. The lab always separates blood into its three major components (plasma, platelets and red blood cells.) Red blood cells live 42 days, platelets five days and plasma for a year. Plasma is the only component that can be frozen.

United Blood Services (UBS) encourages donations with a reward program at [www.unitedbloodservices.org](http://www.unitedbloodservices.org). Donating earns 100 points. Bringing in someone who never gave before (Blood Buddy) earns 400 points. You have two years to redeem points. Cholesterol gets tested free every time you donate. The deferral list is updated every time the FDA changes criteria and when new blood tests are available.

Anyone over 16 can donate but 16 and 17 year olds need signed parental permission. You can give whole blood every eight weeks. Power red can only be donated every 16 weeks. Platelets can be donated every other week by going to a UBS office.

Call the eligibility hotline is **1-800-288-2199 x5497**. Scheduling an

appointment is easy at [www.Bloodhero.com](http://www.Bloodhero.com) using the sponsor code PhoenixVA. Make sure to drink lots of water and provide a picture ID.

Donating has no upper age limit. Once you sign in, there is a verbal screening verifying your qualifications. If there are any medical questions technicians can't answer, a medical phone line is available to get your answers. Donating is next. Sit and eat a snack while you wait 15 minutes to ensure you have no reactions.

Negative blood types are in higher demand since both positive and negative can receive the negative blood type. They may ask you to donate power red if you have a negative blood type. It collects twice the red blood cells by separating and returning the plasma and platelets and putting red blood cells in a special sterile unit.

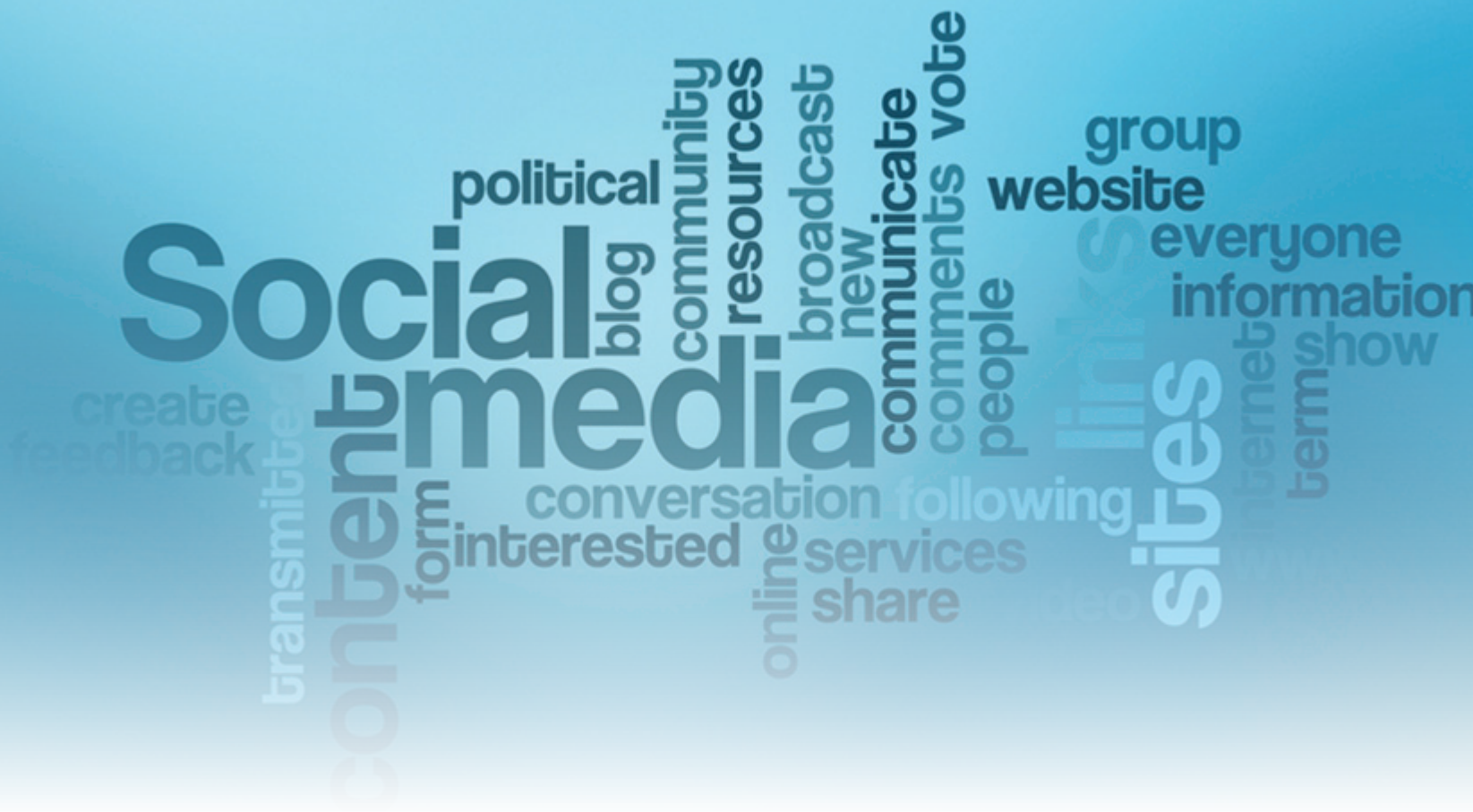
There have been no general blood recalls in Arizona. A computerized barcode system was developed to track each unit of blood. Every unit can be traced back to the donor. If a medical condition that donors may not know about is found (like HIV) UBS will contact you to let you know. Confidentiality of all donors is always protected.

Your help can save a life and it can help you find the hero in you. If you have additional questions, please contact Leslie Johnson at ext. 7292 or [leslie.johnson@va.gov](mailto:leslie.johnson@va.gov). ■



*Adam Jackson, Unite Blood Services Tech, Leslie Johnson, Program Support Asst. holding hand of patient Robert Toruga.*





## VA-cation Challenge Shares Helpful Information Between VA's

The Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) and VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) will partake in a friendly dialog to encourage more people to join us on social media and on our email list. Each week, we will have one VA-cation item posted, combined with info from VAMHCS to highlight our summer VA-cations to share joint health info and other happenings between our two areas.

Here's what we're posting on social media and our VA.Gov Delivery email list to help us start the effort:

It's not the humidity, it's the heat!!! Arizona Veterans wanting to escape the heat for greener pastures can consider a water-bound VA-cation in Maryland. Wherever Veterans enrolled in VA health care travel in the US and in US territories, VA is there for you. Enrolled Veterans in need of medical

care on VA-cation can visit any VA medical center in the nation. Look on this map to find the VA closest to your destination: [http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division\\_fish.asp?dnum=1](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_fish.asp?dnum=1)

The information sharing takes place weekly from June through August and will culminate in a comparison to see who had the most engagement on their sites. You can help PhxVAHealthcare win the competition.

Just tell your friends and family to join us on the Social Media Sites [www.facebook.com/PhxVAHealthcare](http://www.facebook.com/PhxVAHealthcare) and [www.twitter.com/PhxVAHealthcare](http://www.twitter.com/PhxVAHealthcare) and ask them to join us on our new email list through the va.gov delivery system.

The VA with the most interaction will take top honors and will send either a Maryland themed or Arizona themed gift basket to the winner.

*Go TEAM PHOENIX!!!*